



The Nutley Town Team
2019 Board of Education Candidates
Round Table Forums

Who We Are

The Nutley Town Team of [NJ11th For Change](#) is composed of volunteer Nutley residents who are committed to fostering transparency, accuracy, and fact-based information in relation to exploring town issues, while promoting fairness, impartiality, and diversity in local voices.

We are a local team that is part of a much larger grassroots, action-oriented, NJ-based not-affiliated-with-any-candidate organization addressing the issues that affect us all. [NJ11th For Change](#) is a 501(c)(4) unaffiliated organization dedicated to advocating for all people of New Jersey's 11th Congressional District. The mission is to foster an engaged and informed community with the power to shape our political representation so that it is transparent, responsive and accountable—and so that it reflects the values of fairness, compassion, inclusivity and a decent quality of life.

As a town team, we have been active in focusing on voter registration and outreach, GOTV (Get Out The Vote) in Nutley, our NJ LD 28, and CD District 11 as well as advocating for change on the NJ state government level. As a volunteer group seeking to foster productive conversation and outreach on local issues, we are not affiliated with, or connected to, any other Nutley organizations—political or issue-specific—nor any Nutley-oriented Facebook or other online social media groups.

NJ11Th For Change: <http://www.nj11thforchange.org/mission>

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The Candidates Round Table Forums Format

The Nutley Town Team sponsored two roundtable forums with core NTT members and the Board of Ed candidates with Mike Evangelista as moderator; Emma Cortese, Patricia Doherty, and Ruby Mangubat as note takers.

The first roundtable was held on October 2, 2019 with Vito D'Alessio, Ralph Chimento, and Dominick Ritacco. The second roundtable was held on October 11, 2019 with Daniel Carnicella, Frank DeMaio, and Charles Kucinski.

The discussions were casual in format, but wide-ranging based on materials and questions that we submitted in advance to all the candidates so they would be able to discuss in depth.

How We Created Questions and Candidate Summaries

NTT members collaborated in a deliberative process to curate forum questions. The goal always has been to foster a transparent and interactive venue in which facts are presented, ultimately, to support informed voter participation. Our process was as follows:

At an initial meeting, topics involving the pressing issues of the district were considered.

Specific questions were generated by NTT members at that meeting, and recorded. Further, an NJ11 FC FB moderator put out a prompt on that site, intended and announced to be a crowdsourced resource for any members to use in for their own township candidate events. Many of which were iterative of the issues already set out, and were reworked for our purposes. Another NTT member provided questions which at the time were not referenced. Among members of the NTT who submitted questions and provided input are credentialed education and clinical professionals.

The final topics and wording of questions were arrived at via consensus (by members of NTT who participated in the initial meeting) and were meant to reflect the interests and concerns of many Team members, and the wider public.

Following the two roundtable forums, summaries were produced which distilled the information into a easily processed format of highlighted main points. In addition, two questions from the public during the October 9th Nutley Democratic Club Forum were informative across candidates, which we included with their responses.

The summaries were submitted to all candidates for clarification, editing, and their approvals for accuracy of their positions on issues and policies covered. The NTT endeavored to provide balanced representation of candidates' responses to the complex and multi-layered issues under consideration. We urge readers to refer to links provided by the candidates for fuller background and expanded position statements.

Candidate Response Summaries: Chimento, D'Alessio, Ritacco

Background:

Ralph Chimento: Nutley resident since 2004. Lieutenant in the Belleville Fire Department; married father of three children; a son and a daughter who were graduated from Nutley school system and a daughter who is an NHS freshman. Has been actively following the BOE for several years, dating back to helping to successfully advocating for all day kindergarten, and most recently speaking on behalf of the district teachers in relation to the contract dispute. History of working with children via community outreach and coaching, believes we're at a pivotal time to make district decisions to benefit township families.

Vito D'Alessio: Nutley resident since 1996; retired Captain/Essex County Sherriff's Depart; wife who is a Columbia High School teacher; two adult sons who were graduated from the Nutley School System. Motivated to run for the Board of Ed for the families that are going through the system now.

Dominick Ritacco: Nutley resident since 2011, researcher with pharmaceutical comp. Married father of three young children—the oldest a 7 year old son who attends Lincoln school. Motivated to run for the Board of Education, as an invested parent, asks: *"How can I make a difference?"*

How do you see your role as a member of the Board of Education?

CHIMENTO

- Focus on over-sight
 - ◆ Compliance and consistency with state mandates
 - ◆ Budget checks and balances thru committees & initiatives
- Show respect and professionalism to all who would choose to raise their voice

D'ALESSIO

- Serve as:
 - ◆ a neutral/unbiased buffer between administration and public/community
 - ◆ independent body to ensure educational mandates & resources are met
- Support Nutley teachers with regard to pay and responsibilities

RITACCO

- To work cooperatively as a body to highlight willingness to listen and
- Be responsive to the community in a respectful, open way

Candidate Responses: Chimento, D'Alessio, Ritacco

School Security: What is your position on having armed guards in the Nutley public schools? Which data do you use to support this position? If you are in agreement, what experience/qualifications and training should be required of these guards? As an additional focus on security, what types of threat assessment procedures would you implement as standing operating protocol?

Chimento, D'Alessio and Ritacco focused on armed guard protection and deterrents.

Referenced state legislation that expanded eligibility for security personnel: currently, Nutley Schools are not fully staffed. Differentiated between **Class 3 Security Officers** (their recommendation) and **School Security Officers (SSOs)** which the District currently has in place in the middle and high schools:

C3SOs are retired law enforcement officers, who are eligible to work school security.

As such they are subject to on ongoing background checks, often have experience in managing crisis situations, and subject to the same training mandates as active-duty police officers. **SSOs** are not subject to these mandates.

C3SOs are more closely connected to Police Department; report directly to the township PD, and provide more immediacy of effective response

SSOs report to the school superintendent. **SSOs** do not have a direct line to township PD.

Thus, any complaints related to the **SSOs** are the school's responsibility, rather than that of the PD (i.e. investigative responsibility for complaints, and liability).

Further, they believe educators should be able to focus on their expertise and leave security to the security experts.

C3SOs are uniformed (not typically a police uniform, but clearly recognizable with police patch), which provides visibility, and can be positive community role models/reduce stigma of policing. **SSOs** wear civilian clothing.

Both **C3SOs & SSOs** provide an important layer of security for manageable cost to the school system: per diem/no pension or healthcare benefits.

In addition to advocating for **C3SOs** district-wide, will explore:

Hardening vulnerable first floor classroom windows, school entrances/exits, particularly at the high school where multiple ingress and egress points and open campus lunch are problematic, as well as

Monitored camera security.

Candidate Response Summaries: Chimento, D'Alessio, Ritacco

How do you propose to address the overcrowding in the district? The District has paid for the expert advice of demographers and architects on how to solve the overcrowding issue. Please speak specifically to their recommendations. What is your plan for alleviating overcrowding in our schools?

CDR (Chimento, D'Alessio, Ritacco) slate of candidates agree that trailers are an unsuitable solution to the overcrowding issue at Nutley Schools, and point to the unsatisfactory history.

Chimento noted that there were trailers here when he moved to town in 2004, and **D'Alessio's** sons had classes in the trailers at Yanticaw. They feel little was done to address the problematic situation until a crisis point was reached. They propose one solution may be found in focusing on expanding the middle 6th grades at the Walker Middle School. Transitioning students to this Middle School model would free up space within elementary school buildings, thus eliminating need for trailers.

All three candidates related stories of families considering plans to leave Nutley due to school overcrowding; **Ritacco** related a story about a neighbor whose family was devastated by having siblings assigned to different schools as a result of overcrowding.

Candidates spoke of consequences as a result of lack of maintenance to aging school properties contributing to overall debilitated conditions beyond overcrowding which need to be addressed.

What do you believe is the top budget priority for the district? (All three candidates linked budget concerns to overcrowding.)

Chimento D'Alessio and Ritacco are proponents of budgetary solutions which both meet the needs of our students and not over burden town taxpayers.

While in favor of funding via a referendum, they were not in favor of the past referendum. They believe it came with too high a price tag while leaving too many issues unaddressed (e.g. age of infrastructure, unequal distribution of funds among school needs). For the cost, they expected a more comprehensive measure, or a lower cost solution that addressed the sole issue of overcrowding.

They would support a more modest, more targeted proposal in association with exploring feasible, diverse options e.g., Green Acres, Prism/On3 (land or monetary contribution), possibility of a NEW elementary school to solve both overcrowding and infrastructure issues.

Further, they believe a number of additional district issues, such as school bus parking, neighborhood stop drop and go challenges, energy efficiency, technology improvements, and security should be factored in.

They also believe that the public should have been offered more referendum options.

Candidate Response Summaries: Chimento, D'Alessio, Ritacco

Online Links to Candidate Statements, Articles and Campaign Website

<https://www.tapinto.net/towns/nutley/sections/education/articles/ralph-chimento-seeks-position-on-nutley-board-of-education>

<https://www.tapinto.net/towns/nutley/sections/education/articles/vito-d-alessio-candidate-for-nutley-board-of-education-election-on-nov-5-2019>

<https://www.tapinto.net/towns/nutley/sections/education/articles/dominick-ritacco-nutley-board-of-education-candidate-statement>

<https://www.facebook.com/Elect-Chimento-DAlessio-Ritacco-for-Nutley-Board-of-Education-101053431243796/>

<https://www.facebook.com/101053431243796/videos/932305783795000?sfns=mo>

<https://www.facebook.com/101053431243796/videos/767417810362892?sfns=mo>

<https://www.facebook.com/101053431243796/videos/829162820832530?sfns=mo>

Candidate Response Summaries: Carnicella/DeMaio/Kucinski
Background

Daniel A. Carnicella: I am a NHS graduate, owner of an Insurance and Financial Consulting firm in Nutley, homeowner, and most importantly parent. As sitting President of the Nutley Board of Ed, I am dedicated to contributing to the progress of our school district and community to achieve its greatest success. I have been devoted to providing oversight and an independent voice for our children, am fully committed to working alongside the rest of our trustees, Superintendent, and all stakeholders to put our children first.

Frank DeMaio: As a life-long Nutley resident and a product of the Nutley School System whose wife and three children have been educated here, I have a unique perspective on what we can achieve by working together. My fourteen years as an educator, and currently the Superintendent of Recreation for the Township of Nutley give me a wide range of experiences that enhance my abilities to help our district meet the needs of the students and community.

Charles Kucinski: I am a life-long Nutley-ite who has dedicated my adult life to the service; U.S. Navy veteran, 34 years as a township firefighter; and 24 non-consecutive years on the Nutley Board of Education. I served the Board as President and Vice President several times and chaired many committees most notably negotiations. I believe that now more than ever we need independent, unburdened thinkers to guide and maintain the stability and ethical standards of the Nutley School District. The needs of the District are what compel me to run for re-election.

How do you see your role as a member of the Board of Education?

Daniel Carnicella: Highlighted his philosophy: "For me it is the highest role a member of the community can hold. It requires both an unwavering moral compass and the understanding that in times of emotion and uncertainty, reasoned consensus among board members through discussion and evaluation, is necessary for the betterment of our children and community. Additionally, it requires members to care, day in and day out, about the long-term stability and sustainability of our school district. Our role is oversight, policy, and the employment, evaluation, and termination of the Superintendent of schools."

Charles Kucinski and **Frank DeMaio** highlighted the overarching job responsibility, which is strictly policy making. The board members set the direction of the district through the adoption and implementation of state mandated rules, regulations and curriculum in a way that is consistent with community sensibilities. They do not have an executive role and do not manage the implementation of these policies.

School Security: What is your position on having armed guards in the Nutley public schools? Which data do you use to support this position? If you are in agreement, what experience/qualifications and training should be required of these guards? As an additional focus on security, what types of threat assessment procedures would you implement as standing operating protocol?

Carnicella: Soon after the school shooting in Florida, the Board of Education with the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Education, State and local Police Departments, and County Prosecutor's Office conducted a Security Vulnerabilities Study at each of our district schools. The study identified those things we do well, others that need improvement and opportunities to consider. One part of a layered security approach included **Safe Schools Resource Officers** for the High School and JWMS, which provided a level of armed security, and as importantly, provided a unique mental health component that has integrated the **SSRO's** role into the student body, staff, curriculum, and our five year strategic plan's framework fusing health, safety and security collectively. **Note: The CDR slate refers to this position as School Resource Officer (SRO).**

Candidate Response Summaries: Carnicella/DeMaio/Kucinski

Security Continued

Kucinski: These Security Vulnerabilities Reviews are ongoing every 6 months or so with the goal to continually monitor situational needs; revisiting and evaluating specifics of the program, logistics, administration, direction, cost, training, and expansion. Our schools have numerous safety protocols in place to ensure students and staff are safe from harm.

DeMaio: Speaks with experience from teaching at Roosevelt Middle School in West Orange and I believe an **SSROs** in the Middle and High Schools is very beneficial for the following: deters altercations and bullying; provides an adult role model who may also serve as someone to confide in. Additionally, at the elementary level, secure entrances at all schools is vital to safety and a critical measure toward controlling building access.

Carnicella, Kucinski, and DeMaio are not in favor of armed **Class3 Security Officers** school-wide. However, they support the current armed **Safety Security Officers** in the High School and JWMS, but not in elementary schools. They point to the recent [National Association of School Psychologists caution](#) against over-emphasizing universally increasing armed security in schools.

How do you propose to address the overcrowding in the district? The District has paid for the expert advice of demographers and architects on how to solve the overcrowding issue. Please speak specifically to their recommendations. What is your plan for alleviating overcrowding in our schools?

Carnicella, Kucinski and DeMaio spoke of the “shrinking buildings” due to the state mandates that have been placed on all school districts, which in effect, caused a decreased in available space by about 30%. They highlighted state mandate contributors:

- In 1965 a school of 30 classrooms inclusive of 1 dedicated Art & Music room and 28 classrooms (27 students per class). In 2019 the same school after state mandates would be reduced to 21 classrooms (36 students per class). The remaining 9 rooms all state mandated rooms include Art, Music, Self-contained Sp. Ed., Resource Room, Computer lab, English Second Language, OT/PT/ Speech Therapy, and World Language. Capacity reduction has gone from 750 students in 1965, to a school in 2019 which can only house about 540 students.
- ABA / Autism Program: impacts space as state law mandates self-contained classes of 10-12 students.
- All day kindergarten: full day mandate reduced immediate space, prior utilization of one classroom accommodated two (AM/PM) structured class times.
- Developments/ Mixed Use: Housing development is a relatively recent and visible factor may lead to over-estimated contributor to our overcrowding. But data indicates state mandates have had much greater impacts on reducing instructional space over the years.
- Single Family / Generational Turnover: A large but silent contributing factor is the rise of the sale of single-family homes from empty nesters to new families with young children.

In order to solve the overcrowding, investment in our infrastructure with a successful passage of a safety and infrastructure referendum is needed. They reference three demographer’s reports which recommend moving to a true middle school model, which puts all 6th, 7th and 8th grade classes in one structure, and further indicates expansion of the middle school will not alleviate all the overcrowding.

Kucinski pointed out a review of multiple architectural plans revealed the most satisfactory solution necessitates permanent additions to two of the elementary schools would be required.

DeMaio spoke of his prior teaching experiences with three grade model in other districts with positive impact for capacity management and academic benefit.

Carnicella spoke to the inefficacy of stop-gap proposals. Renovation and rehab of existing spaces —such as decommissioned boiler rooms and custodial spaces—are not suitable solutions, as these spaces are below ground without natural light and access to fresh air; do not have safe, immediate emergency egress; and would require extremely costly asbestos removal/remediation.

Candidate Response Summaries: Carnicella/DeMaio/Kucinski

What do you believe is the top budget priority for the district? (All three candidates linked budget concerns to overcrowding.)

Carnicella, Kucinski and DeMaio were unanimous that the way forward now is to focus on increasing apportionment of the state aid “pie” for education. The current Board of Education is working closely with State Legislatures, Senate members, Nutley Commissioners, and the NJ Department of Education to have the State re-examine and reformulate the financial dispersion among districts. Currently, Bloomfield and Belleville are receiving approximately \$30,000,000 each, and Nutley receives about \$8,000,000. More equitable distribution of state aid would have a tremendous impact on the Nutley Public School District in providing the funding for our educational needs. A one-time emergency aid application of \$1.8 million has also been submitted to the state and we continue to discuss the inequity in funding to Nutley.

Charlie Kucinski would be in favor of a smaller, incremental renewed referendum initiative to cover the expenses of infrastructure expansion to accommodate classroom overcrowding—similar to the first budget option of the 2018 referendum.

DeMaio: would be in favor of seeing an addition at the middle school possibly housing 5th and 6th graders. If there is to be a referendum, fiscally responsible to the taxpayers while getting the most for our money and increasing educational factors would be a priority..

Carnicella believes it would be responsible and feasible to reconsider a more expansive referendum to be forward-thinking and proactive. A referendum would include coming to terms with some form of taxpayer contribution as part of the solution.

Online Links to Candidate Statements, Articles and Campaign Website

- <https://www.tapinto.net/towns/nutley/articles/nutley-board-of-education-candidate-statement-danny-carnicella>
- <https://www.tapinto.net/towns/nutley/categories/candidate-statements/articles/frank-demaio-for-nutley-board-of-education-candidate-statement>
- https://www.tapinto.net/towns/nutley/categories/candidate-statements/articles/charles-w-kucinski-is-seeking-re-election-to-the-nutley-board-of-education?fbclid=IwAR2YtSet_GziBNFFSMgB81We9HHYDoh9oOh3uiFZ3Bx3OJD-URsXdAdnkR8
- <https://www.tapinto.net/towns/nutley/categories/candidate-statements/articles/charles-kucinski-on-school-security>
- <https://www.facebook.com/danielcarnicella/videos/634061073788149/>
- https://www.facebook.com/charlie4boe/posts/135645981104073?_tn_ =K-R
- <https://charlieforboe.com/?fbclid=IwAR0T84NFuGMcegEYiPgQL7cNhSpWnot7DobYJAvxsB6uGZwugNN1Q0dHP1E>
- <https://www.tapinto.net/towns/nutley/articles/nutley-public-schools-construction-projects-wh>
- https://www.nasponline.org/assets/Documents/About%20School%20Psychology/Media%20Resources/NASP_Statement_on_Increasing_Armed_Security.pdf

Additional Candidate Information

Two queries and the candidate responses from the October 9th Nutley Democratic Club Forum are included here:

The state has earmarked about \$2 million to study K-12 consolidation as part of NJ Senator Steve Sweeney's proposed "Path to Progress" Plan. The plan includes merging identified school districts state-wide to help save the state money. (At this time, Nutley is not part of the plan.) Consolidation and shared services have pros and cons for how they might impact the quality of educational service. What is your position?

All six candidates were unanimous that while "shared services" might be beneficial for some municipality services, they generally do not support shared services/consolidations specifically across districts for educational purposes.

Please provide a very brief statement that you feel is important for the voters know about you.

D'Alessio I would make unbiased, balanced decisions between tax payer and student needs.

Chimento: I tell you what's on my mind in open and respectful discussion. I'm a start to finish type of person.

Ritacco: I am a great listener. Communication and consideration of all options and sides is important.




Carnicella: I am an independent thinker who believes in building consensus. I work to keep personal emotions out of decision making and firmly believe facts and data should guide team decisions

DeMaio: I am someone who is approachable and willing to listen to concerns and ideas. I'm an independent thinker who can work well as part of the board of education team.

Kucinski: I am a leader who is a team player, experienced, brings stability and integrity and has the energy to continue the hard work ahead of us.

Sample Ballot

**Township of Nutley
School Election - Elección Escolar**

	<p>For Members of the Board of Education Three Year Term Vote for Three</p> <p>Miembros del Consejo de Educación Término de Tres Años Vote por Tres</p>					
	<p>Frank DeMAIO</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1E</p>	<p>Ralph CHIMENTO <i>Courage, Dedication, Respect</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2E</p>	<p>Vito D'ALESSIO <i>Courage, Dedication, Respect</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3E</p>	<p>Dominick RITACCO <i>Courage, Dedication, Respect</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4E</p>	<p>Daniel A. CARNICELLA</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 5E</p>	<p>Charles W. KUCINSKI <i>Experience, Integrity, Stability</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 6E</p>
	<p>Write In <i>Use Keyboard below</i> <i>Escriba - Use el teclado abajo</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Write In <i>Use Keyboard below</i> <i>Escriba - Use el teclado abajo</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Write In <i>Use Keyboard below</i> <i>Escriba - Use el teclado abajo</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p>			

Nutley Township Official Website Election Information: <https://www.nutleynj.org/voter-information>

Essex County General Election Information: <http://www.essexclerk.com/Services/4>

The Nutley Town Team

For more Information contact:

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[http://www.nj11thforchange.org/
contact](http://www.nj11thforchange.org/contact)

